



Antonine Wall

Heritage Trail

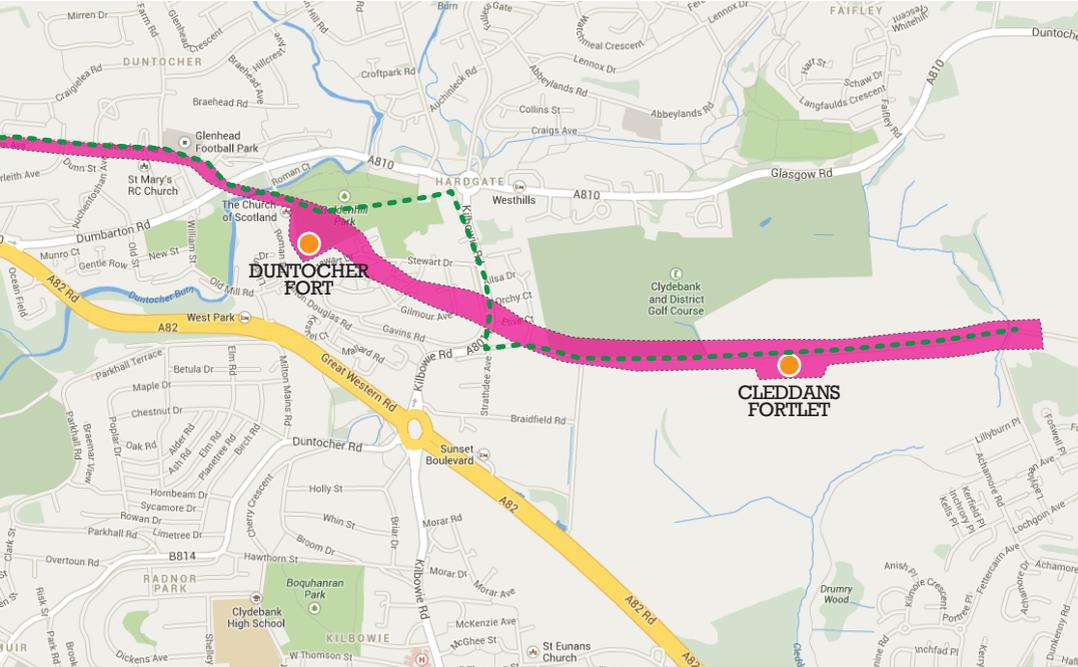


On the 7th July 2008 the Antonine Wall was listed as an extension to the World Heritage Site “The Frontiers of the Roman Empire”, by UNESCO, joining Hadrian’s Wall and the Limes Germanicus, the Germanic and Raetian Frontiers, in Germany. The structure was named after the Emperor Antoninus Pius (86AD–161AD) who had ordered the reconquest of southern Scotland moving the Roman Frontier north from his predecessor’s frontier of Hadrian’s Wall between the Solway and the Tyne.

Should a visitor to West Dunbartonshire today visit Roman Crescent in Old Kilpatrick they would be standing at the most northern frontier of the Roman Empire, as Roman soldiers did over one thousand eight hundred years ago – an empire which stretched from West Dunbartonshire to present day Egypt and the eastern shores of the Black Sea.

A Victory Coin depicting the Emperor Antoninus Pius (reigned 138–161AD)

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The Antonine Wall

The Antonine Wall was constructed between the present day settlement of Bo'ness, on the Firth of Forth, and Old Kilpartick, on the River Clyde, stretching to a length of 39 miles (63 km) with construction beginning in AD 142 and taking about twelve years to complete. Unlike Hadrian's Wall to the south, the Antonine Wall was built of turf on a stone foundation, topped with an imposing wooden palisade, rather than being a purely stone fortification.

When complete the wall was, in most cases, a bank of layered turf or earth to a height of around four metres, with a large ditch to the north side and a military way, or road, to the south. The Romans built nineteen forts along the wall at a distance of 2 miles (3.3km) between each one. This was a change from the original plan of constructing forts every 6 miles (10km); in addition to the forts at least nine smaller fortlets were also constructed, some later being replaced by forts.

The Antonine Wall enters West Dunbartonshire from the east near to the farm named Cleddans, between Drumchapel and Faifley and continues west through Duntocher and then down towards Old Kilpartick terminating on the banks of the Clyde close to Gavinburn School.

Cleddans Fortlet

Discovered in 1979 and excavated in 1980, Cleddans Fortlet was one of the smaller fortified structures on the wall and the first in West Dunbartonshire travelling from Castlehill Fort in the east. The internal measurements of the structure were 18m east-west and 17.6m north-south within a rampart set on a 3.6m wide stone base. The fortlet predates the Antonine Wall, but would have joined the wall at some point as part of the military frontier. Gateways to the north and south of the ramparts would allow access to both sides of the wall, with the fortlet acting as a secure passing place from the Roman south to the

Distance Slab of the Twentieth Legion, Cleddans

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Caledonian north. A Roman distance slab, of local sandstone, was ploughed up near this site in 1969 and is now held in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow. The slab, which was well preserved reads:

For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, father of his country, a detachment of the XX Legion Valeria Victrix built 3000ft (of the Wall).

There are no visible traces of this fortlet today.

It is interesting to note that the name “Cleddans” can be found in other locations along the Antonine Wall. The name is derived from the old British Cladd meaning dyke, Cleddans being “the place of the dyke”. The present day road from Cleddans Farm to Kilbowie Road follows the line of the Wall and the Roman Road.

Duntocher Fort and Fortlet, Golden Hill

A Roman bath-house was discovered on the western slope of Golden Hill, close to the site of Duntocher War Memorial, in the late Eighteenth Century. Some archaeological artefacts were revealed, including a statue of a water nymph holding a shell from which water would pour into a basin.



**Statue of Water Nymph
from Bath-house,
Golden Hill**

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**Duntocher War Memorial,
site of the Roman Bathhouse**



Aerial View of Duntocher Fort, Golden Hill, West Dunbartonshire. Showing the original Fortlet, Fort and Annexe.
Image courtesy of RCAHMS

Excavations carried out between 1948 and 1951 discovered that before the Antonine Wall was constructed there was a small fortlet at Duntocher, commanding a prominent position on the hill and defended by a ditch and a rampart 3.6 metres wide at its base. As with the fortlet at Cleddans there was an entrance on both the north and south sides of the building. To the east of this fortlet a later fort was added, the smallest known fort on the Antonine Wall. This fort was defended by a rampart 3.9 metres wide and three ditches; there was no south facing entrance to the Duntocher Fort. An annexe, larger

than the original fort, was also built to join the fort on its west side and enclosed by a rampart. Two interpretation panels, erected by Clydebank Local History Society and West Dunbartonshire Council, can be found in Goldenhill Park highlighting the Antonine Wall and the Duntocher Fort and Fortlet. Longer grass in the park allows the visitor to identify the outline of the wall and fortlet.

There are no visible traces of the fort, fortlet or annex today. A short length of stone base from the wall is exposed and protected by railings on the slope of Golden Hill.



Base of the Antonine Wall, Golden Hill



Roman Bridge, c1905

Commonly known as the Roman Bridge, the Antonine Wall did cross the Duntocher Burn at this point, so it is almost certain that a bridge has existed on this site since Roman times. The Bridge was rebuilt by Lord Blantyre in 1772, and was rebuilt again in 1943, following damage sustained in the Clydebank Blitz of 1941. An inscription on the bridge reads, in latin:

“For the Emperor Titus Aelius Antoninus Hadrianus Augustus, Father of his Country, the legate Quintus Lollius Urbicus arranged for this bridge to be built. It was restored from a ruinous condition by Lord Blantyre in the year of our Lord 1772. Blitzed 1941. Repaired 1943.”

Westwards from the bridge, the Wall and Roman Road follow the line of Beeches Road towards Old Kilpatrick.

Old Kilpatrick Fort

The Antonine Wall terminated in the west at the present village of Old Kilpatrick by the banks of the Clyde, with the site of the fort now being covered by the former bus depot. Excavations were carried out in 1923-24 and further work was carried out by trenching in 1931, proving that there was a fort on this site before the wall was built. Facing northwest with rounded corners, the fort would have been established to command the River Clyde and the entrance to the Firth. Past archaeological investigations have shown that within the fort were the remains of the headquarters building and a granary, both built of stone, and three wooden buildings which may have been stores, workshops and barn; a latrine was situated in the south corner of the fort. Structural remains were also discovered which appear to have been earlier than the Antonine Wall leading to the hypothesis that this fort had been destroyed and reoccupied at least once, perhaps being used to command the Clyde waterway prior to the wall's construction.

Finds from excavations near to the Old Kilpatrick Fort include an altar to Jupiter which was discovered in Old Kilpatrick,

Altar to Jupiter, Old Kilpatrick

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Altar from Old Kilpatrick, dedicated to Jupiter by the First Cohort of Buenaui

dedicated by the First Cohort of Baetasians, who were, for a time, stationed at Bar Hill, close to Cumbernauld. Another discovery, from the seventeenth century, was the distance slab of the Twentieth Legion recording the completion of 4411 feet of the wall. The distance slab reads:

For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antonius Augustus, father of his country, a detachment of the Twentieth Valiant and Victorious Legion completed [this work] over distance of 4411 feet.

The slab shows Victory reclining, in the style of a river god, with the name of the legion inscribed within a large wreath held in her right hand.

Distance Slabs

One of the most common artefacts discovered during excavations of the Antonine Wall, along its whole course, have been Distance Slabs; the majority discovered in West Dunbartonshire can be viewed in the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow. From the Bridgeness Slab in the east to the Distance Slab of the Twentieth Legion in Old Kilpatrick around fourteen slabs have been recovered from the area around the wall. Distance Slabs were made by the Roman legions to mark the completion of a section of the wall. The distance slabs are richly decorated depicting, in some cases, Roman gods and also symbols from other non-Roman cultures incorporated into the empire. They were also used to glorify the conquests of the Emperor Antoninus Pius and to show the support given to him by the gods.

Distance Slab of the Twentieth Legion, Old Kilpatrick

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Distance Slab of the Sixth Legion, Braidfield Farm
© The Hunterian, University of Glasgow 2012



A cast of a Distance Slab of the Twentieth Legion,
Hutcheson Hill © The Hunterian, University of Glasgow 2012

An excellent example of a Distance Slab was found close to Braidfield Farm, near Duntocher Fort, in 1812. The slab is decorated with two winged mythological females flanked by two Roman soldiers below the central inscription of:

*IMP C T AELIO HADRIANO
ANTONINO AVG P P VEX LEG
VI VICTRICS P F OPVS VALLI P
MMM CCXL F*

which translates as: *“For the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, father of his country, a detachment of the Sixth Victorious, Loyal and Faithful Legion completed the rampart work [over a distance of] 3240 feet”*

Supplying the Wall and Naval Power

With seven thousand soldiers based on the wall, supplying them with food, clothing and other vital supplies was a considerable task for the Roman authorities. Some supplies, such as timber and stone for building were obtained from the local area, as can be seen by Distance Slabs being carved from local stone. Other goods came from farther afield, with the wall being connected to the rest of the empire by supply chains reaching south through Roman Britain and over the Channel. The

great expense of overland transport to supply the wall meant that, when possible, goods were transported by sea. It is widely believed that goods were shipped from the Thames Estuary up the east coast to a harbour near to the eastern terminus of the wall. Cramond or Inveresk are believed to have been the main eastern harbour, with large settlements being discovered in these areas. There have been suggestions that a harbour was also created at the western end of the wall in West Dunbartonshire, with some mentioning Old Kilpatrick and others believing that this may have been based near Dumbarton. Older sources have suggested a settlement and harbour at Dumbarton, named Theodocia or Theodosia, yet no evidence of such a settlement had been discovered.

The End of the Wall

The Antonine Wall did not last long as the northern frontier of the Roman Empire, being abandoned after about twenty years in the 160s AD. There is no apparent reason for the abandonment of the wall, although it has been suggested that troops were required elsewhere in the empire; British troops are known to have been stationed in north Africa and Germany. The buildings of the wall were demolished, with the wooden structures being burnt, to avoid future use by the natives, but the Romans did not go as far as destroying the wall, leaving us with the earthworks visible today. In many



1834 Baldwin and Craddock Map of Roman Britain.
With the Vallum Antonini (Antonine Wall) and
Theodocia.

cases the Roman Legions removed the Distance Slabs from the wall and concealed them in pits in the surrounding areas, perhaps done through pride, but giving us an excellent resource for discovering who built the wall. The Emperor Antoninus Pius' reign lasted almost as long as the wall, with his death on 7th March 161 AD, in his childhood town of Lorium occurring whilst the wall was being abandoned.

A coin depicting the Empress Lucilla, wife of Emperor Lucius Verus, Antoninus Pius' successor (reign AD 161–169). Minted between 164 and 169 and discovered in the granary of the Old Kilpatrick Fort, this suggests that the withdrawal from the wall took some years to complete.



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Links and Other Information

West Dunbartonshire Museums and Galleries:

www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/tourism-and-visitor-attractions/museums-and-galleries

University of Glasgow, The Hunterian:

www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian

Historic Scotland, The Antonine Wall:

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/worldheritage/world-heritage-sites-in-scotland/antoninewall.htm

The Antonine Wall, Frontiers of the Roman Empire:

www.antoninewall.org

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland:

www.rcahms.gov.uk



This leaflet is one of a series of six Heritage Trails designed to guide you around some of the most fascinating local areas, and to indicate significant social, historical and architectural features. Each leaflet includes an annotated map, detailed narrative, and a number of images relating to the trail. Each leaflet will be available on the West Dunbartonshire Council website, at:

www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk



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United Nations
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Frontiers of the Roman Empire
inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2005



Scottish Natural Heritage
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Nadar air fad airson Alba air fad



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